

WASHINGTON CRITIC



EVERY EVENING.

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THE WASHINGTON CRITIC.

Washington, D. C.

RICHARD H. SYLVESTER, Editor.

WASHINGTON, MARCH 16, 1888.

LOCAL OPTION AGAIN.

The Critic believes it to be the duty of Congress, under the Constitution, to exercise exclusive legislation over the District of Columbia, meaning that whatever legislation is adopted for the District should be adopted by Congress, and not through the people at the polls. At the same time it is but just that the interests of the citizens of the District should be carefully and invariably considered; that they should have the right of petition and remonstrance; that they should be given hearings upon all matters affecting their welfare, and that due regard should be had by Congress to public sentiment.

While, therefore, the power of legislation relative to the alcoholic liquor traffic rests wholly with Congress, it is not only proper, but in a certain sense obligatory that the wishes of the citizens of Washington should be as nearly as possible ascertained before any extreme prohibitory measures are adopted. We have always held that this was a purely local question, to be considered independently of any outside dictation, and that there would be neither reason nor justice in the association of the District with the Territories in any proposed scheme of legislation upon this subject.

Although both are under the immediate jurisdiction of the Government, their conditions are widely different, and because a certain policy might advantageously apply to one it does not follow that the same policy would apply to the other. Even in the case of the Territories, however, the people are fairly entitled to the benefit of the principle of self-government, as expressed in the force of popular opinion.

So far as prohibition in the District is concerned, it is quite obvious that Congress does not care to assume an original and absolute responsibility. It would leave to the people to say what their preferences are. It would not put a law upon the statute book that would become a dead letter for lack of public sentiment to support it and compel its enforcement. How, then, shall this sentiment be ascertained?

The bill introduced in the Senate by Mr. Colquitt yesterday provides for a local-option election whenever 10,000 inhabitants of the District shall petition the Chief of Police to order such an election, which is a somewhat roundabout but perhaps practicable way of getting at the merits of the question. As to its constitutionality, a grave doubt may be interposed.

It would seem more direct and business-like, as proposed by some members of the Senate District Committee, to obtain an expression of opinion through the Police Department by a general canvass of the city. In this way the sentiment of the people could be nearly enough determined as for or against prohibition to afford Congress a safe guide for its future legislation without resorting to the questionable machinery of a popular election.

Senator Spooner, in the meantime, is understood to favor a high license system, and contemplates the introduction of a bill to that effect, which, after all, points to the correct and common-sense solution of the question. Still, as it may be a question of license as in the case of prohibition, that the voice of the people is entitled to be heard, it may become necessary in order to appease the agitation which has been raised to determine the consensus of opinion by one of the two methods above proposed; and of these methods the Police Department plan is much to be preferred as being strictly legitimate and not obnoxious to the objections that may be urged to the popular election scheme.

THE FAIR OF THE POTOMAC CLUB is a booming success, and the boys are to be congratulated upon the number and liberality of their friends. It will continue to boom to-night, and wind up with a grand complimentary row to the ladies to-morrow night.

ABOUT EIGHTY-SIX YEARS ago there was placed in the State-House at Dover, Delaware, a portrait of General George Washington, for which the Legislature of that State very reluctantly paid \$508, including the frame and transportation. The picture was painted by a Philadelphia artist named Volozan. The Wilmington Evening Journal, which is our authority for the truth of this history, says further that about the year 1820 an indifferent painter named Eichholtz was employed to renovate the portrait, and succeeded in so altering the original as to render it almost unrecognizable, "capping the climax by placing upon the American General the uniform of a French field marshal." Since that time nothing has been done to make or mar this wonderful work of art, and it hangs in the wide stairway of the Dover State-

House "covered with dust, soiled and rapidly going to ruin."

We protest in the name of the early fathers and their later sons against this shabby desecration of the memory of the immortal George. The State of Delaware owes it to the country either to turn this picture face to the wall or else rub it out and insert a decent portrait. Cannot we invoke the aid of the State Department in this matter?

IF THE WALLS of the present Postoffice Department building are massive enough to stand three or four more stories, an Architect Mullett says they are, and the architectural effect be improved by the addition, we cannot see that there is any need of extending the building in any direction except skyward. As for the new City Post-office, Mr. Mullett regards the City Hall site as a fine one, which it unquestionably is; but the question has dragged along so many years that the people of Washington will be satisfied with almost any location, provided that a selection be made without further delay. The views of the Citizens' Committee on this subject should have weight.

Mrs. JOHN L. SULLIVAN is a harder hitter than her husband. She says John is a "great big good, and I am glad Mitchell liked him."

SPARKING of the C, B. and Q. engineers' strike and the Presidential possibilities, it occurs to the average mind that Judge Gresham would be satisfied to reserve his decision in the matter until next July.

THE NEW YORK Sun, in speaking of the late blizzard, says: "We have had a grand opportunity to see with our own eyes how majestic Nature can be in her wrath." The Sun is slightly off. It wasn't Nature, it was Greely.

The New York papers are not raising a very tremendous yell over their circulation during the three bad days of the blizzard. Newspapers are more animals in cases like this, and a freeze stops the circulation.

THE DEAD BODY of a frozen man was found in the hallway of the New York Tribune office Tuesday night. There was nothing on his person to identify him except a poem on "Spring."

In the investigation of pension claim agents ordered by the Senate, we would like to inquire how the appointed committee will proceed to investigate the agents' charge that just now, preceding the Presidential election, members of both houses and parties are exceedingly anxious to do all they can to secure the soldier vote.

JUDGE GRESHAM is in a dilemma between the deep sea of the railroad corporations on the one hand and the devil of a big strike on the other. The Judge being a prominent Presidential candidate, The Critic extends him its sincere condolence.

THE ALABAMA Republicans will probably put a ticket in the field this year, contrary to the usual custom. This is another evidence of that tyrant's heel of oppression—the Protective tariff.

NOTES AND GOSSIP.

LONDON has a cyclorama depicting Niagara Falls.

Mrs. U. S. Grant is at the Windsor Hotel, Jacksonville, Fla.

"DOLBY & SEVEN BROS." is the unique name of a New York butter firm.

MARIE ANTONETTE's scissors and pen-knife were recently sold at auction for \$130.

SINCE THE ADVENT of natural gas the consumption of coal has diminished 4,500,000 tons a year.

THE REPUBLICAN STATE CONVENTION of Illinois, to be held at Springfield, May 1, will consist of 48 delegates.

BUTTER COINMIA wants a mint. It has no gold coin, and its silver and copper coins are made in England.

WALKING IS BECOMING a very fashionable pursuit. This remark will contain no more for some members of the theatrical profession.

HOW, POPE BARROW of Georgia, ex-United States Senator, who has spent the past winter in Florida for the benefit of his health, has returned to his home at Atlanta.

THE QUESTION of whether cows should be permitted to run at large in the streets was decided by a local option arrangement in Merceburg, Pa., recently. The majority vote was against the cows.

THE LADY which was used at Andersonville prison during the war as a prison signal, is now the property of the Hays brothers of America, Ga., whose father built a portion of the prison as a contractor under General Winder.

PENNSYLVANIA has a cyclorama of the 1867-78, 1890-1891, and 1892-1893, and 1894-1895, and 1896-1897, and 1898-1899, and 1900-1901, and 1902-1903, and 1904-1905, and 1906-1907, and 1908-1909, and 1910-1911, and 1912-1913, and 1914-1915, and 1916-1917, and 1918-1919, and 1920-1921, and 1922-1923, and 1924-1925, and 1926-1927, and 1928-1929, and 1930-1931, and 1932-1933, and 1934-1935, and 1936-1937, and 1938-1939, and 1940-1941, and 1942-1943, and 1944-1945, and 1946-1947, and 1948-1949, and 1950-1951, and 1952-1953, and 1954-1955, and 1956-1957, and 1958-1959, and 1960-1961, and 1962-1963, and 1964-1965, and 1966-1967, and 1968-1969, and 1970-1971, and 1972-1973, and 1974-1975, and 1976-1977, and 1978-1979, and 1980-1981, and 1982-1983, and 1984-1985, and 1986-1987, and 1988-1989, and 1990-1991, and 1992-1993, and 1994-1995, and 1996-1997, and 1998-1999, and 2000-2001, and 2002-2003, and 2004-2005, and 2006-2007, and 2008-2009, and 2010-2011, and 2012-2013, and 2014-2015, and 2016-2017, 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